



# Blackboard Intelligence helped Lewis Clark Community College develop a data-driven retention strategy

Lewis & Clark Community College | [www.lc.edu](http://www.lc.edu) | Godfrey, Illinois | Enrollment: 26,000

## How Lewis & Clark Community College uses analytics to diagnose, understand and improve student retention



### \$700K Saved

over three semesters at Lewis & Clark Community College, by identifying at-risk students and informing retention programs



### +17pt Improvement

In student retention, within identified at-risk population

Retention is a complex and increasingly urgent challenge. Students leave for a wide range of reasons, from perceived indifference on the part of the school to financial hardships, and these departures are having increasingly serious implications for both student and institutional success.

Lewis & Clark Community College, a mid-sized community college in Godfrey, Illinois, understands the importance of retention. As an open access institution, Lewis & Clark has a commitment to support and empower their learners. “We’ve really encouraged students who never would have imagined themselves going to college to come to Lewis & Clark,” says Jill Lane, Dean of Liberal Arts and Business. “We believe that we can teach them and help them to be successful learners.”

Using Blackboard Intelligence to identify student risk levels and informing the most effective strategies for supporting them, Lewis & Clark has pioneered an approach to data-driven student retention—an approach that has empowered the school to be more efficient, and helped students achieve their goals.

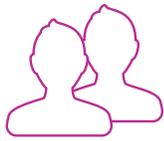
### Insight: Identifying at-risk students

Lewis & Clark’s entrepreneurial culture spans every facet of the school, from the President to the CIO to the faculty and institutional research teams. At every level, the college is energized by a constant drive to ask and answer questions that make for greater student achievement and engagement.

When Lewis & Clark’s Student Success team began to apply Blackboard Intelligence to retention at the college, they first analyzed historical retention rates for a wide range of characteristics over five years. After aggregating student information system (SIS) data, with deep demographic and learning metrics, they studied criteria including students’ cumulative GPA, number of credits taken, gender, ethnicity, enrollment type, and other attributes, and found that students who met four or five high-risk criteria were at greater risk.

One of the Lewis & Clark team’s key findings identified a relationship between GPA and success with online courses. For students with GPAs below 2.7, success rates in online courses plummeted. Other findings ran counter to conventional thinking or anecdotal evidence. Some might have imagined, for example, that developmental students were more vulnerable to attrition. But the team’s research with Blackboard Intelligence revealed that this was not the case: taken alone, status as a developmental student was not correlated with higher rates of attrition.

Lewis & Clark was able to use the results of the research to create a hierarchy of students most at risk in order to take action. With the new data in hand, they were able to develop a targeted strategy for retention that concentrated attention where it was needed most.



20,000

Student population



12.6

Average class size



22 to 1

Student-to-teacher ratio



42

Degrees offered

## Strategy: data-driven planning

Lewis & Clark took a multi-pronged approach to advancing its retention strategy.

Some insights were ready to be institutionalized: once a relationship between GPA and online success was identified, the school required that students achieve a GPA above 2.7 before they could pursue online courses. “We were able to dig very deep into our student populations with Blackboard Intelligence,” says Dr. Dennis Krieb, Director of Institutional Research and Library Services for the college, “and find what we needed to make a change.” This change was tremendously effective, closing a ten percent achievement gap and bringing overall online success rates at the college into parity with face-to-face success rates.

Lewis & Clark’s more detailed understanding of its students’ hierarchies of risk also informed the college’s decision to prioritize targeted retention initiatives. As one example, the institutional research team was able to produce compelling data on the positive impact of the College’s “Student Success Centers”: retention for students in the program was 15-17 percent points higher than the average rate. This data helped lead the school to adopt its new intrusive advising model.

Under the new model, advisors are assigned caseloads, with cases prioritized based on the dimensions Blackboard Intelligence helped discover. Now, advisors know how a given student fits into the college’s identified risk matrix. When students begin to show indicators of attrition risk, they may be referred to the Student Success Center, provided with an emergency loan, counseling, or any number of retention resources. With Blackboard Intelligence, advisors are empowered to easily prioritize at-risk students who most benefit from their attention—and take the proper action.

## Refinement: building a data-driven culture

For Lewis & Clark, student retention isn’t a one-time initiative – it is a continuous process of exploration, evaluation, and refinement. It is a data-driven effort that involves educators, researchers, and administrators from across the institution, including the sponsorship of the CIO’s office.

“My team has a great deal of engagement with all the offices in terms of data management, reporting, business processes, and policy,” explained Chief Information Officer Mark Tuck. “With Blackboard, we were able to make a number of adjustments to their technology to meet our unique reporting needs, and then run with it.”

Within Academic Affairs, an increased adoption of data is being observed, according to Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Linda Chapman. “Faculty are now looking at changes in the way they teach to try to improve student learning— with the support of data from Blackboard Intelligence.”

After just three semesters of data-driven student success initiatives, the college’s new strategies had helped save \$700,000 in tuition revenue. And Lewis & Clark continues to investigate new ways to ensure that students get the most out of their education. “With each new venture,” says Dean Lane, “we find ourselves attracting new partners, asking more questions, and setting up more research to see whether we’re answering our questions.”

Technology alone isn’t enough to solve large institutional challenges—it takes the right people, and the right vision. At Lewis & Clark Community College, an entrepreneurial culture mixed with a student-centric campus and talented team made it possible to carry out research that asked the right questions, build a strategy focused on solutions, and carry the institution forward.

Learn more about Blackboard Intelligence at [Blackboard.com/Analytics](https://blackboard.com/analytics)

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